



Creative Writing



For the Middle School Classroom



Savvy Scribe®

Creative Writing

A Teacher's Discovery® Publication



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About the Author



Carolyn Troxel is an author and teacher. She grew up as a twin in a small town in Nebraska. Carolyn graduated from college with an English and journalism degree with an emphasis in art. Before becoming a teacher she worked as a swimming pool attendant, deli chef, gravestone artist, bank teller, college editor, ad designer, newspaper journalist, and woodworking artisan. She has taught art, Spanish, English, and journalism in grades 7–12. She has also taught adult computer classes through a local community college. She has had the opportunity to speak in small-group sessions at national educational conventions in both Chicago and San Diego.

She currently lives with her husband, son, and daughter in central Nebraska along with an array of cattle, horses, dogs, and cats.

To the Teacher

Overview

Strengthen your students' ability to produce effective, creative writing! *Creative Writing* engages the students' imagination and helps them focus on the importance of descriptive writing. The book is divided into three sections:

1. Basics
2. Style
3. Genre

Each section contains reproducible creative writing overviews and activities to ensure your students' success.

How to Use

Copy and distribute each overview and activity; discuss topic; complete in class, except where indicated.

Timeline

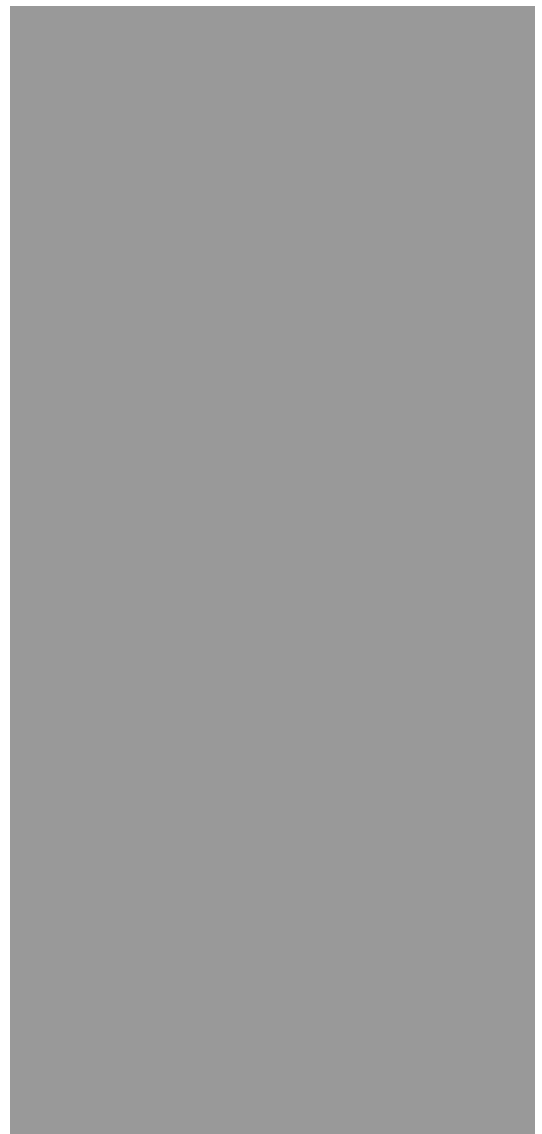
Review overview: 5–15 minutes each

In-class activities: 5–50 minutes each

Out-of-class activities: 15–60 minutes each



Basics



Character

Overview

“Harry had a thin face, knobby knees, black hair, and bright green eyes. He wore round glasses held together with a lot of Scotch tape because of all the times Dudley had punched him on the nose. The only thing Harry liked about his own appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead that was shaped like a bolt of lightning. He had had it as long as he could remember, and the first question he could ever remember asking his Aunt Petunia was how he had gotten it.”

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
J. K. Rowling

Do you have a clear picture of Harry in your mind? Do you know his thoughts, his likes, his dislikes? If so, then Harry is a complex character.

Most people are complex and demonstrate many character traits. Just when you think you understand them, they surprise you. Do you have a friend who is consistently late but who — the one time you're running late — arrives early. How about a friend who talks incessantly, but who — the one time you want her to talk to a boy for you — is struck speechless. Characters in a story are similar; often their personalities are complex and contradictory.

Round Character

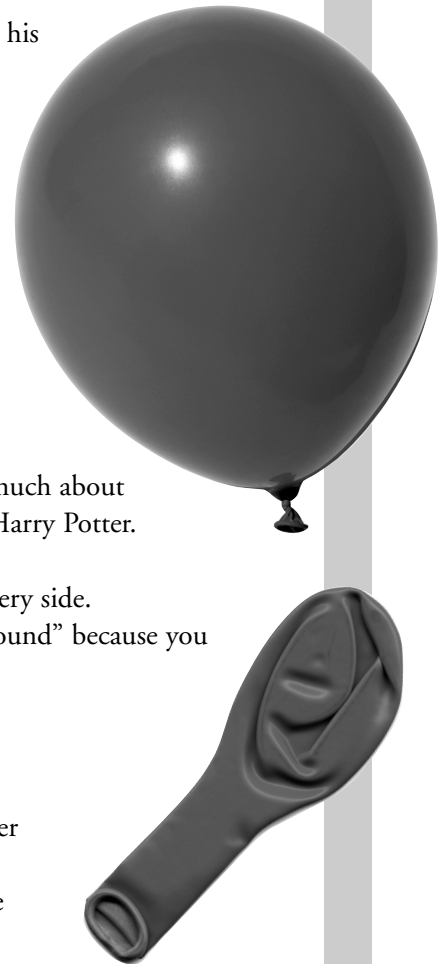
A **round character**, usually the main character, is seen from all sides. The reader knows much about the character, including his preferences, his thoughts, and often his family. Think about Harry Potter.

- Picture a large, round balloon as a symbol for a round character. You see it from every side.
- Also, a round character is like your classmates whom you consider good friends, “round” because you know much about them.

Flat Character

A **flat character** is seen on one side only. Minor characters are often flat because the reader needs to know little about them for the story to make sense. Often a flat character is stereotyped such as “the friendly girl at the fast-food restaurant counter.” Think about the many unnamed students at Hogwarts.

- Picture a deflated balloon as a symbol for a flat character because you only see one side of it.
- A flat character resembles classmates who are acquaintances at best. You don't know much about them except where they sit at lunch or in class.





Stereotype

A **stereotype** is a generalization about a person or group based on appearance, age, occupation, gender, cultural heritage, etc. Any character that fits a preconceived idea is a stereotype—the grouchy old man (all old men are grouchy), the tattooed biker (all motorcyclists are tattooed tough guys), or the uptight boss (all bosses are tense). Think about the muggles.

Dynamic Character

A **dynamic character** changes during the course of the story. Consider how much you have changed since you attended elementary school. If you wrote a story about yourself over the past few years, readers would consider you to be a dynamic character. If you had a tragic event happen to you last year, like a divorce or a death in the family, you'd see even greater change in yourself than your classmates see. People change based on how experiences affect them. To measure character change in a story, compare the character's behavior at the beginning with his/her behavior at the end. If the character has discovered something new about life, that character is dynamic. Think about Hermoine.

- Picture “dynamic” as a lit stick of dynamite in your hand. The explosion changes your life forever!



Static Character

A **static character**, usually a minor one, does not change throughout the story. Such characters are the opposite of dynamic characters. Think about the ghosts in the hall.

- Picture “static” as the minor shock you receive from static electricity. It changes nothing in your life.

Character Types



Name: _____

Class: _____

Directions: Label the following characters as either **round** or **flat**.

1. _____ the gas station attendant
2. _____ the secretary outside the boss's office
3. _____ the little girl who must find her father before she is put in an orphanage
4. _____ the main character in the story
5. _____ the main character's mother

Directions: Label the following characters as either **static** or **dynamic**. Circle the key word that indicates whether the character is static or dynamic.

1. _____ the boy who comprehends that his father's harshness helps him mature
2. _____ the nurse who always arranges the flowers at the foot of the patient's bed
3. _____ the judge who never listens to the lawyer's excuses
4. _____ the bride who doesn't want her sister at the wedding but eventually forgives her and asks her to be the maid of honor
5. _____ the fireman who loves to rescue people

Loveable Characters



Name:

Class:

Scenario:

Pretend you have been hired by an animation studio to create its next blockbuster cartoon. Your job as a scriptwriter is to develop three very loveable characters to be marketed to children.

Directions: Complete the following information about your characters. On the back of this paper, make a quick cartoon sketch of each to share with your animation team.

Attention!

Sometimes characters are animals or inanimate objects like books, chairs, toasters. Although they exhibit human characteristics, they are not people. Animation studios thrive on the use of non-human characters. Toys, lions, cars, and ogres all have made animation history.

Loveable character number one

1. What kind of non-human character is it?
2. What is its name?
Create a name that reflects the character and hints at one of his qualities — for example, Goofy, Doc, Chip, or Speedy. It's like a nickname.
3. What is its most distinguishing feature?
Think of how people remember the character — for example, by its big ears, squeaky voice, fast legs, or great intelligence.

Loveable character number two

1. What kind of non-human character is it?
2. What is its name?
3. What is its most distinguishing feature?

Loveable character number three

1. What kind of non-human character is it?
2. What is its name?
3. What is its most distinguishing feature?

Build Me a Character



Name:

Class:

Directions: Think of a character, then answer the following questions.

Attention!

A good way to develop a character is to write its biography before you start writing your story. Sometimes authors base characters on real people whom they know, or they combine two real-life people into one character.

1. What is the name of your character?
2. How old is the character?
3. What does the character look like?
4. Who are the character's parents? How does the character treat them?
5. Does the character have brothers and sisters? What do they think of the character?
6. What kind of clothes does the character wear?
7. Does the character have a job? Does the character have very much money?
8. What does the character want to own?
9. What awards has the character won?
10. Where does/did the character go to school?
11. What is the character's most embarrassing moment?
12. Where does the character live?
13. What does the character use for transportation?
14. What does the character like to eat?
15. What is the character's favorite book, song, movie, game, sport?
16. What's one secret about your character?

Setting

Overview

“Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies, with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer’s wife. Their house was small, for the lumber to build it had to be carried by wagon many miles. There were four walls, a floor and a roof, which made one room; and this room contained a rusty looking cookstove, a cupboard for the dishes, a table, three or four chairs, and the beds. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had a big bed in one corner, and Dorothy a little bed in another corner.”

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz
L. Frank Baum

Don’t you feel like you just stepped into Dorothy’s house? The setting is the time and place (where and when) of a story. Setting is also important to the story’s meaning.

Characters and Conflicts

The setting helps the reader understand the characters and their conflicts. A poor girl in Beverly Hills isn’t the same kind of poor girl in a third-world country. An Olympic athlete in 2010 isn’t the same kind of athlete as one in early Greece.

Plot

The setting helps develop the plot. If a story takes place in an abandoned warehouse, the reader brings some preconceived ideas as to what might happen there as opposed to a story that occurs in a beauty salon. The reader expects a different plot or at least a different set of circumstances at the beauty salon.



Detail

Snap a picture of the setting. Describe it as if viewing it through a camera lens, but don't set your camera on zoom the entire time. If you describe a lonely cowboy riding into the valley in the summer of 1889 and mention every pebble and blade of grass he encounters, your reader dozes off by the time the rider dismounts his horse. Don't insult the reader's intelligence! Use the Goldilocks theory—not too much, not too little, just right.

Capture

Through the setting, the reader steps into the story with the characters. Expert writers capture the reader by drawing him into the setting. Review the beginning of one of your favorite books and notice how the author captures your interest. Imitate the author's technique to lure your readers into your setting.

Setting — Past, Present, or Future?



Name:

Class:

Have you ever seen a picture and wondered about the story behind it? Now is your chance to do some detective work to narrow down the time and place shown in the picture.

Directions: Complete this activity outside of class in 20 minutes. Find a magazine picture of a setting (a place in time) with no people visible. Cut it out and glue it to a piece of heavy paper. Label the **time** and the **place**. Bring this back to class tomorrow.

Time

1. Identify the time in the picture by using the following:

- the position of the sun
- the age of the objects shown
- the timepieces exposed (sometimes clocks and watches are in the picture)

If there are no clues to identify the time element, label it as a “universal” time period that transcends time and space.

Time Elements

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| ■ century | ■ season |
| ■ decade | ■ date |
| ■ year | ■ time of day |
| ■ hour, minute, second | |

Place

2. Identify the place by using the following:

- the natural landmarks or landscape
- the objects shown
- the name exposed (sometimes the location is found on signs in the picture)

If there are no clues to identify the place element, label it as a “universal” place that transcends time and space.

Place Elements

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| ■ planet | ■ continent |
| ■ city, state, country | ■ inside |
| ■ outside | ■ building |
| ■ sky, land, or water | ■ room |
| ■ place in a room | ■ urban or rural |



Shakespeare's Setting

Activity

Name:

Class:

If you want to talk about a computer in today's world, then setting seems insignificant. What if you talk about a computer in Shakespeare's time? Now setting makes a big difference! Imagine how hard it would have been for people even 100 years ago to comprehend the Internet.

Directions: Visit Shakespeare's time period. After studying some of the modern inventions of that era and the lives of the people of England, use your imagination to describe a computer to a person from that time. Write the two-paragraph conversation in the space below.

Attention!

Transporting modern characters and objects to a past time period was something Mark Twain did in his novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Some other examples of time travel include H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, Mary Pope Osborne's *Magic Tree House Series*, Jon Scieszka's *The Time Warp Trio*, and Jack Finney's *The Third Level*.

Conflict/Plot

Overview

A story contains a plot consisting of a beginning, middle, and end, with a conflict in between. How simple is that!

Enticement

For the plot to be successful, it must entice the reader. If you wrote a story about a boy who wakes up, walks to school and returns, you'd leave your readers disappointed or disillusioned. Despite a beginning, middle, and end, it lacks a conflict. A story about a boy who wakes up, has a problem deciding what to wear to school, goes to school and returns, would still not impress the reader because the conflict is not significant. To add an element of conflict that might have potential, increase the stakes. It is more interesting if the boy can't decide what to wear to school because he wakes up blind, he wakes up in another world, or he wakes up with a third arm. A reader notices this story!



Originality

Make your story original. If your story is about two fourteen-year-olds who fall in love despite their feuding families don't name one of the characters Romeo. Make your version more creative by adding new ideas or a different twist to the ending. It's okay to take an old idea or familiar plot if you package it differently.

Practice

One of the best ways to become a great writer is to read continually and learn from the professionals. Study their characters, settings, language, and plots. Pay attention to their beginnings, middles, and endings. Reading good authors improves your writing dramatically.

Plot Line

To visualize the plot, create a plot line which works like a graphic organizer to lay out the main features of the story. The beginning is called the **exposition** and "exposes" the characters and the setting. The next segment is called the **"rising action"** which introduces a conflict that adds some tension to the lives of the characters. The **"climax"** is the point of greatest tension where the main character battles an adversary. The **"falling action"** ties up the loose ends, and the **"resolution"** concludes the story with conflicts "resolved."

Plot the Numbers



Name: _____

Class: _____

Directions: Follow the steps below to create an interesting plot combination. Don't confuse the title of this activity with a geometry assignment. It's just a way to randomly generate a plot for a story.

$$\frac{\text{Character} + \text{Setting} + \text{Conflict}}{\text{Beginning, Middle, End}} = \text{PLOT}$$

1. Brainstorm a list of nine character types, nine settings, and nine possible conflicts. The first row is done for you.

■ Note the following types of conflicts:

Man vs. Man Man vs. Self
 Man vs. Nature Man vs. Society
 Man vs. Supernatural/Fate

	characters	settings	conflicts
1.	<i>cafeteria worker</i>	<i>hospital—yesterday</i>	<i>lost a hearing aid</i>
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

2. Using the last three numbers in your telephone number (or the numbers in your birth date, address, zip code, etc.), select the elements to make up a story. (For example, 406-555-2246 uses the number 2 character in the **characters** column, number 4 in the **settings** column, and number 6 in the **conflicts** column.)
3. On the back of this paper, write a paragraph summary of this random story plot. Let your imagination soar!

Point of View

Overview

Two main points of view are best for writing a story—first person point of view and third person point of view. Second person point of view works best for personal pieces of writing such as notes or emails to a friend, or for speeches where you know your audience. Below are examples of first, second, and third person.

	singular	plural
First Person	I, me	we, us
Second Person	you	you
Third Person	he, she, it	they, them

First Person — “I” (“I had fun at the amusement park.”)

First person tells the story through the voice of a character who is taking part in the story. The reader gets an intimate look inside the main character’s head. However, limitations occur when using first person. The reader doesn’t know what the other characters are thinking unless the narrator speculates about them.

Third Person — “he/she/it” (“He had fun at the amusement park.”)

Third person tells the story through the eyes of a narrator who is outside the universe of the story. It uses such words as “he,” or “she,” or “it” to tell the story. The narrator may inform the reader of the main character’s and other character’s thoughts.

Generally, it’s a good idea to keep the point of view the same throughout the writing. Sometimes, however, the point of view switches from one character to another depending on whom the narrator is “following.” For example, the reader knows the thoughts of the detective in the first chapter and the thoughts of the criminal in the second chapter. With third person, the writer must remember to include not only the thoughts of the characters, but what the characters say (dialogue) and do (actions), and what other characters think, say, or do to them.

Limited or Omniscient?

Writers use third person in at least two ways. **Third person limited**, tells the story using “he,” “she,” or “it” through the eyes of one or a few characters. **Third person omniscient** tells the story through the eyes of all important characters. It’s an all-knowing point of view.



Exercise

Class:

Attention!

1. Determine whether the novel is written in first person point of view or third person point of view. If third person, determine whether it is limited or omniscient.
2. Write three sentences from each novel that support your answer.
3. Review various chapters in case the author flips viewpoints between chapters.



Point of View— It's All Perspective

Activity

Name:

Class:

Scenario:

Depending on your point of view, tattoos are either beautiful works of art or flesh-scarring stains. Imagine that you went to get a tattoo on your back, but there was some confusion. Instead of what you wanted, the artist tattooed a picture of a poodle balancing a dog biscuit on the end of its nose. This is an irreversible mistake. This could be a good mistake or a bad one, depending on your point of view.

Directions: On the back of this paper, write one paragraph for each of the following scenarios.

1. Write a paragraph from your point of view. How did you feel when you discovered the mistake? What happened when you got home? What did the kids at school think? Did you find it funny, or did it make you angry?
2. Write a second paragraph from the viewpoint of the tattoo artist. Was he upset or was this his best work yet? Did he turn it into a business venture and retire a millionaire?



Dialogue

Overview

Dialogue is a conversation between two or more people.

It's important to understand dialogue before you begin writing. Dialogue is used in the following ways:

1. to create a great beginning to interest the reader—"Stop it!" Hannah cried.
2. to establish characterization—"I never done did it; I swear," he stammered.
3. to show instead of tell—"Wipe that smile off your face and get to work," he ordered.
4. to add some humor—"He's 'chewsy'," Carmen explained. "He likes to pick out his own kind of chewing gum."

Listen

To become a master of dialogue, be a patient listener. Listen to people talk.

Select

Learn to weed through conversation and select the best words and phrases. Real-life conversations aren't crisp, clean, and neatly packaged. They are sudden, unrehearsed, and chaotic. Although dialogue gives the illusion of conversation, it has been sharpened.

Add

Toss a little action in between your characters' conversations. The reader gets bored with a story that is entirely dialogue.

Tag

Use tag words so they don't hinder the flow of the sentence structure. Basically, tag words are substitutes for the word "said." Don't overuse them or use them inappropriately, so they seem forced, but don't totally avoid them.

admitted
agreed
answered
argued
asked
begged
boasted
chuckled

complained
cried
demanded
giggled
hinted
hollered
interrupted
laughed

lied
muttered
promised
questioned
remembered
replied
sang
scolded

screamed
shouted
sobbed
warned
whined
whispered
wondered
yelled



Writing

Activity

Name:

Class:

Dialogue Means Partners

Directions: Complete the following activity step by step with a partner. Share with the class when you're finished.

Step One: Dialogue Brainstorming

On a separate piece of paper, brainstorm with your partner a dialogue you might hear in the lunch line or in the hallway at school. The dialogue is between two people (person one and person two). Make each person speak three sentences for a total of six sentences.

Step Two: Description Brainstorming

For each line of dialogue spoken, come up with descriptions of the people as they are talking. Use all three descriptions along with the dialogue and an appropriate tag in your exchange.

1. What does your person look like?
2. What is your character thinking?
3. What is your character doing?

Step Three: Tag Brainstorming

Select three of the following tag words per person to connect the dialogue to the person talking. Tags are words that you tag onto the dialogue to show the speaker's tone or action as he or she speaks.

admitted	chuckled	interrupted	replied	whined
agreed	complained	laughed	sang	whispered
answered	cried	lied	scolded	wondered
argued	demanded	muttered	screamed	yelled
asked	giggled	promised	shouted	
begged	hinted	questioned	sobbed	
boasted	hollered	remembered	warned	

Brainstorm Example

Person One

Dialogue: "I haven't seen a good movie in a long time."

Description: Sue, twirling her hair

Tag: hinted

Person Two

Dialogue: "Would you like to go out to see one tonight?"

Description: Tom, looking down shyly

Tag: asked

Step Four: Weave It

Transfer the information from your brainstorming to the Dialogue Weaver. You're creating a dialogue; if you make it flow, it weaves!

Dialogue Weaver



Name:

Class:

Person One

Description:

Tag:

Person One: Dialogue

Person Two: Dialogue

Person Two

Description:

Tag:

Person One

Description:

Tag:

Person One: Dialogue

Person Two: Dialogue

Person Two

Description:

Tag:

Person One

Description:

Tag:

Person One: Dialogue

Person Two: Dialogue

Person Two

Description:

Tag:



Dialogue is Saying Sentences Aloud

Activity

Name:

Class:

“Hey, Joe, too bad you weren’t invited to the party last night; it was fun.” Sometimes our words hurt or embarrass others, and sometimes our words embarrass us. Surely you have experienced brain lapses that affect your whole life. If not, write about one that you have heard others blurt out.

Directions: In the space below, write a one-page story. Begin the story with a direct quote that would have been better left unsaid. Use it to create a great beginning to interest the reader in your story. After your stunning introductory sentence, explain the situation that produced those words and create a story using dialogue between you and at least one other character. Create an ending that leaves everyone happy. Continue on the back, if necessary.

The Whole Story

Overview

Every story has a title, beginning, ending, and in-between. Each section poses different problems.

Tacky Titles

Titles intrigue the reader but also contain clues to the content of the story. Keep in mind that shorter titles are usually easier to remember than longer ones.

Beginning Blahs

He felt every blood vessel in his body expand as the hot sauce slithered down his throat. The reader may think, “I’ve eaten sauce like that too!” The beginning grabs the reader with something spicy. Newspaper journalists know, if the reader isn’t intrigued by the first sentence, what follows won’t matter. The reader moves on to another story. Advertisers know another’s words compete for readers all the time. We live in such a busy world of television, video games, and the Internet that readers don’t have time to savor every word they consume, so they look for the choicest cuts.

A good place to start a story is by plunging the reader into some action. Biting into a blood-boiling spicy burrito will get the reader’s heart pounding rather quickly.

Another avenue is to startle the reader and arouse curiosity. For example: *“Thomas never ordered the third item listed on any menu.”* A beginning sentence like that will make the reader ask, “What’s going on? Why?”

Mind-boggling Middle

Here you discover the main character and his problem. Involve the main character in one or two minor conflicts in the rising action before he engages in the big one in the climax. If the hero overcomes several problems, his final battle makes him an even greater winner to the reader.

Eternal Ending

The ending rejuvenates the reader. The climax, falling action, thrilling conclusion, and resolution...all parts come together to create a satisfying whole.



Big Screen Dreams

Activity

Name:

Class:

Scenario:

Think like a movie executive! Consider the following questions: Are you going to write a comedy or an action adventure? What is your time period? Where will you film it? Who are the actors? Will you write a sequel?

Directions: In the space below, write the title and a one-paragraph summary of a movie script. For example, write a spin-off of a movie you disliked and improve it.

Attention!

A blockbuster movie usually has an unlimited budget, big name actors and actresses, digital enhancement, and state of the art computer capabilities. What constitutes the perfect movie for you?



Cool is as Cool Does

Activity

Name:

Class:

Scenario:

Picture a lone teenage boy with a million-dollar smile, unusual glasses, and a '70s-style blue tuxedo as he walks to his high school prom, carrying a corsage and a photo album.

Directions: In the space below, write a one-page summary of a story that uses the above description in the final chapter. Include an award-winning title, a catchy introduction, a detailed body, and a conclusion that explains the description above.

Attention!

Readers often empathize with the character with whom they identify the most, or they cheer for the “underdog” in a story.



Style



Sensory Detail

Overview

“Day had broken cold and grey, exceedingly cold and grey, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth-bank, where a dim and little-travelled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland.”

To Build a Fire
Jack London

The details in the above description help us see the grey day and feel the cold earth. The sensory detail help us relate to the story using our five senses.

Five Senses

Good writers rely on sensory details to connect the reader to a three-dimensional imaginary world from the two-dimensional page. In this way the story becomes believable.

Readers

Readers are willing participants and partners with a writer who guides them skillfully through the plot. The use of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch enhances this experience.

Connections

To maintain the reader’s attention, tantalize him with sensory details so that one part of the brain is reading and the other part is connecting at a more primal level. Masterful writers engage and electrify the reader with sensory details.





Sensory Details Trigger Feelings

Activity

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, using one of the options below, write two different paragraphs.

Name:

Class:

Option One: Describe someone you know well.

Paragraph one: Write a sight or visual description of the person's appearance.

Paragraph two: Write a description of the person using sound, smell, touch, and taste words whenever possible.

Attention!

Sensory details create effects depending on the sense triggered. They also create a different feeling depending on whether you are describing a person or a place.

Option Two: Describe a place you know well.

Paragraph one: Write a sight or visual description of the place.

Paragraph two: Write a description of the place using sound, smell, touch, and taste words whenever possible.



Sensory Details Bug Me

Activity

Name:

Class:

Scenario:

Imagine you have just discovered that crunched up red beetle shells are used as food dye in some of your favorite foods. Your task is to use words that cause the reader to be disgusted.

Directions: In the space below, write a one-page letter to the company that makes your favorite “red” food. Explain your disgust at eating bugs. In your explanation use descriptive words that create revulsion in your readers.

Attention!

A good writer elicits a physical reaction from the reader, which makes his/her audience feel a strong emotional connection to the piece.

Senses

Overview

Scientists study the five senses to understand human behavior. Writers think like scientists to determine what senses to include in their writing to make the reader respond.

Smell that rotten egg!

Smells activate emotions. Have you ever smelled chlorine and remembered your younger days at the swimming pool? Have you ever smelled disinfectant and remembered a time in a hospital? How about a food smell that sickens you because of a past experience?

Taste that sour lemon!

Taste and smell are similar. Tastes usually fit into two categories—good/bad and food/non-food.

Hear those nails on the chalkboard!

Sounds evoke emotions too. Musicians know that certain songs trigger memories. Tunes can even make us retain information longer. Can you honestly say your ABCs without singing them?

See that field of sunflowers!

Sight is probably the easiest sense to master because our culture bombards us with colorful visuals.

Touch those slimy pumpkin guts!

Touch is easy to incorporate into writing, especially when we describe weather conditions like hot and cold.

Single or Multi-sensory?

Some forms of writing use one sense to dominate the piece. Poetry and nursery rhymes often make sound the most frequent sense, whereas food ads focus on smells, tastes, and sight. Since a radio ad can't show the product, writers use words to convey the other senses.

Many children's books focus on one sense, but young adult novels incorporate more variety. When's the last time you read a novel with a scratch-n-sniff spot? Good novels engage readers with sensory details to make the reading experience rich and satisfying.



It Makes No Sense

Activity

Directions: Follow the steps below.

Name:

Class:

Attention!

Humans love to experience the sensation of touch. Have you ever seen a sweater in a store that you just had to touch? A fluffy dog whose fur is irresistible? Sometimes we just can't help ourselves!

1. List ten things that feel soft (*a cuddly kitten, a fluffy pillow, a suede jacket*).
2. List ten things that are harsh to the touch (*razor sharp, burning hot, prickly*).
3. List your soft touch words with your harsh touch words (*her razor sharp lips, the prickly kitten, my burning hot jacket*).
4. Write three sentences that use your new touch combinations to describe someone or something.

Sentence one:

Sentence two:

Sentence three:



I Remember that Smell

Activity

Directions: In the space below, describe a memory that is triggered from a specific smell.

Name:

Class:

Attention!

Ever notice that some smells remind you of things in your past? The sense of smell is a powerful memory trigger. Do you remember the smell of your grandparents' house, the smell of freshly cut grass, the sweet smell of cotton candy at a carnival, or the smell of the dentist's office? All of these things remind us of experiences we've had before.

Tone

Overview

“‘The Red Death’ had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal — the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution.”

The Masque of the Red Death
Edgar Allan Poe

How does the above quote make you feel? If you feel the doom of death, then Edgar Allan Poe did his job...he created a specific mood or tone to help you connect to the story.

Notice how the tone of the following sentences connotes varying degrees of “heat.” Some are flames of simple innocence while others carry tones of danger and threat. Think of tone as temperature. Some stories are icy cold while others are ablaze with heat. Some border on whimsy while others suggest emergency or desperation.

“The flame is hot!” she yelled, trapped in the burning room.

“The flame is hot!” yelled mother as everyone hurried to the campfire to roast marshmallows.

“The flame is hot,” he snickered as he threw the homework assignment into the fireplace.

“The flame is hot,” cried the little boy bending over to blow out his birthday candle.

“The flame is hot,” muttered the repairman relighting the furnace’s pilot light.

“The flame is hot,” the demon roared as he prepared for another victim.



Genre Tone

Think about the various genres and the tone/mood connected to them.

Mystery—scary tone

Comedy—funny tone

Science fiction—adventurous tone

Fantasy—magical tone

Non-fiction—scholarly tone



Writing

Activity Title

Activity

Name:

Class:

Directions: Read the following poem. On a separate piece of paper, dissect it line by line. Change some of the words to reflect your own thoughts on a particular month. For example, use your birthday month! Write a poem copying the style and mood of Robert Frost's "October."

Attention!

Use imitation to learn new writing techniques. If you mimic the style of a master writer, you are practicing great writing. By copying the style, form, and mood of established authors, you learn how to improve your writing.

Robert Frost (1874–1963).
A Boy's Will. 1915.
"October"

O HUSHED October morning mild,
Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;
To-morrow's wind, if it be wild,
Should waste them all.
The crows above the forest call; 5
To-morrow they may form and go.
O hushed October morning mild,
Begin the hours of this day slow,
Make the day seem to us less brief.
Hearts not averse to being beguiled, 10
Beguile us in the way you know;
Release one leaf at break of day;
At noon release another leaf;
One from our trees, one far away;
Retard the sun with gentle mist; 15
Enchant the land with amethyst.
Slow, slow!
For the grapes' sake, if they were all,
Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,
Whose clustered fruit must else be lost— 20
For the grapes' sake along the wall.



A Pleasant Tone Passes School Board Issues

Activity

Name:

Class:

Scenario:

Video games are good for you. Your job is to convince the school board that you should be allowed to play video games because they enhance your educational experience and prepare you for a job of the future. That flight simulation game may just lead to a career in aeronautics.

Directions: In the space below, write a one-page persuasive letter to the school board asking to add video games to the curriculum. Use specifics in your writing, such as video game titles, character names, and brand names. Keep your tone professional and factual.

Similes and Metaphors

Overview

Similes and metaphors compare things that are not alike, and they fall under the category of figurative language. The word “figurative” refers to “figure of speech,” which is not intended to be taken literally.

Using figurative language shows creativity in your writing. **Similes** compare two things using “like” or “as.” For example, *The day I lost my best friend was **like a black curtain descending between us***. **Metaphors** are more direct. For example, *The day I lost my best friend **is a black ink smudge on the page of my life***. Sometimes using a single theme for your similes and metaphors creates powerful comparisons.

Comparisons

Even though I’ve never tasted frog legs, when someone says they taste **like** chicken, I understand. If I describe my Uncle Bill’s dark hair, dreamy eyes, and flashy smile, you glimpse his looks. However, if I say he looks **like** Tom Cruise, the understanding is lightning fast!

Connections

Great writers use metaphors and similes in their writing to route readers to a destination using the express lane. Did you see any metaphors on this page?

1. understanding—compared to—lightning
2. reader’s (understanding)—compared to—express lane

Add similes and metaphors to your writing to keep the neurons snapping in the reader’s brain.



Activity

Name:

Class:

Resemblance of Similes and Metaphors

Directions: Using similes and metaphors, describe the following people and explain the comparison. Use one simile and one metaphor for each person.

Example:

Metaphor: *My brother is a rooster because he wakes up at sunrise and awakens everyone else.*

Simile: *My brother is like a sitcom because he always makes me laugh.*

1. the President
2. the person on the other side of the speaker at a drive-through window
3. the clerk at the grocery store
4. the mail delivery person
5. the movie star
6. the secret agent
7. the swimming coach
8. the race car driver
9. the astronaut
10. a relative



Similes and Metaphors Puzzle Me

Activity

Name:

Class:

Directions: In the space below, write a paragraph comparing your family to an inanimate object. Then on the back, list each family member and explain how the comparison works. Include a minimum of four family members. If necessary, include extended or potential family members.

Example:

My family is a puzzle (the inanimate object). My mom is the edge piece keeping everyone in place and walking the straight and narrow. My brother is the missing piece, lost to us for years now. My sister is the back side of the puzzle, imitating everyone else without standing out. I am the corner piece. I help my mom keep my family together.



Genre



Mystery

Overview

**“All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.” Edgar Allan Poe**

For centuries the mystery genre has fascinated readers. Such authors as Edgar Allan Poe, Agatha Christie, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Carolyn Keene, Lilian Jackson Braun, and Sue Grafton have attracted readers with their twisted plots and edgy themes. Their characters include criminals, detectives, spies, and cats. Their goal is to keep readers guessing. Make it your goal too.

Characters

The characters in a mystery usually include a main character who solves a crime. That character may be a master detective or a kid with a telescope. Another character might be someone who helps the main character solve the crime and may be a best friend or an unnamed comrade. Having a partner gives the main character someone with whom to brainstorm ideas or ponder clues. A mystery also needs a culprit or criminal. Someone has to be the bad guy. Then there are usually one or two “red herrings” — peculiar characters who always appear suspicious but turn out to be a strange neighbor or odd janitor.

Setting

Remember how setting adds to the mood of the story? To add mystery, choose a decrepit mansion, dark cave, or secret passageway. Consider adding disturbing natural aspects such as fog, darkness, and storms to introduce some frightening sensory details. The characters see lights flicker and hear eerie sounds. They feel hot breath on their necks or sense someone watching them. A good writer depicts characters so believably scared that readers share their fright. Anyone who has read Stephen King or the *Goosebumps* series alone at night understands that feeling!

Plot

The mystery story includes elements of other stories, but differs in plot. The plot contains a crime to be solved, whether it be the theft of a fortune in diamonds, murder, or espionage. The writer challenges the reader with clues intended to trick him. By starting a mystery with a hook, something exciting or baffling, you grab the reader's attention.





Mystery Spy Ensemble

Activity

Name:

Class:

Scenario:

You have been hired by the government to invent high-tech weapons for the CIA.

Directions: In the space below, write four paragraphs describing your high-tech weapon inventions based on the four items listed below. Use descriptions detailing physical features, capabilities, costs, dangers, etc. Create something for your agents that no one has ever seen or used before. Continue on the back, if necessary.

1. listening device
2. escape vehicle
3. disguise for an undercover operative
4. phone or communications device



Mystery in Your Neighborhood

Activity

Name:

Class:

Scenario:

You accidentally receive your neighbor's UPS package and discover what appears to be stolen weapons. When your new entertainment system intercepts your neighbor's cell phone frequency, your suspicions are confirmed. Criminals are living next door. You know that you must take action.

Directions: In the space below, write a one-page story detailing your neighbor's destructive plot and your plan to stop it. Think like an undercover detective. Add suspense and a "red herring" or two to keep your reader guessing. Be creative so that the neighbors in the story and the readers don't see it coming. Continue on the back, if necessary.

Definition:

A "red herring" is a misleading clue.

Comedy

Overview

“If Dracula can’t see his reflection in a mirror, how come his hair is always so neatly combed.”

Steven Wright

Comedy started in the early theater. Plays were categorized as either comedies or tragedies, the former ending happily and the latter ending unhappily. A light tone and lack of serious content characterize comedy.

Fun

Comedy is fun because the characters make readers laugh. Some students are born comedians. They know there are varying degrees of comedy from “really-really-lame-it’s-so-stupid-it’s-funny comedy” to “hilarious-roll-around-in-the-aisle humor.”

CONSIDERATIONS

Laughter

Humor is critical to comedy. Don't be afraid to make fun of yourself. This kind of humor is particularly funny. At the same time, remember that some humor offends others. To avoid this issue, create comedy that pleases a large audience. Also, avoid serious topics such as death or pain. If you're unsure if your piece is funny, ask a parent or friend to provide insight.



Characters

Include non-human characters like you see in cartoons. Gary Larson's “Far Side” cartoons are hilarious because the characters often are animals. Use opposites in humor. Pair a comical character with a serious one (the straight man) to heighten the level of humor. Think of the humor you could write by comparing stress in your day to the stress of the President's day.

Timing

Pacing and timing are important. The humor must build to a climax and then slap the reader with a punch line. When the reader laughs with surprise, you know your humor worked. Engage your audience with a series of funny comments. Once they start laughing, you're on your way!

Words

Enliven humor by adding sensory details, similes, and metaphors. Also, use dialogue in comedy. Think of jokes that have one character speaking to another. A “knock, knock” joke wouldn’t work without dialogue. Use puns—a play on words—in dialogue. “Won’t you ‘bee’ my honey?”

Plot

Create a ridiculous situation for humorous effect. Use illogical reasoning to think outside the box. “The reason I lose cell phone coverage is because I’m bald and receptors bounce off the bald spot. I’m okay if I wear a hat.” Don’t tell the reader that you are about to write something funny. Nothing ruins a piece of humorous writing more than when the reader knows or anticipates the punch line. Catch him off guard. Slide the humor into your sentences and pleasantly surprise the reader.



You Don't Always See Comedy Coming

Activity

Name:

Class:

Directions: Describe an embarrassing or humorous situation that looks confusing on first impression because the person entering the scene missed what happened. On a separate piece of paper write one paragraph explaining one of the following situations.

Situation Choices:

1. A pirate is seen carrying a watermelon into a shoe store.
2. The teacher hands a student a can of spray paint and encourages the student to do his or her finest work.
3. A doctor draws a fake moustache on a sleeping patient in the hospital room.
4. The mother gives her children a hundred dollar bill and says to come back when they need more.
5. A truck driver races his vehicle through a yellow light with a grandfather clock in the truck cab.

Attention!

Missing part of a conversation or the first ten minutes of a television show often results in losing the meaning of the situation. When that happens, humor isn't far behind.



Comedy plus Drama

Activity

Name:

Class:

Sometimes we watch so much television that the shows start to run together. Now is your chance to run them together on purpose. Combine a comedy with a drama to produce a “comma” or “dramedy.”

Directions: In the space below, brainstorm characters that are very different from each other (like Sponge Bob and Freddy Krueger). Choose your best pair of characters and, on a separate piece of paper, create a one-page comic strip combining the genres that your characters come from.

Science Fiction

Overview

“The Eve of the War: No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man’s...”

“The Coming of the Martians,” *The War of the Worlds*
H. G. Wells

Science fiction sometimes occurs in a future world or setting and contains some of the characteristics of fantasy. However, science fiction seems believable. Stories that fit this genre often include the following details:

1. alien characters or robots
2. planets and the universe
3. advancements in technology—miracle medicines or incredible machines



Alien Characters

When naming your characters in science fiction, create names that are futuristic but easy to pronounce. Dnnikjbozrbg looks more like a typing error than the name of the enemy commander. Use logical letter combinations! Do not name characters with closely related lettering unless you want the reader to confuse the characters. Have you ever read S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* and confused Darry with Dally?

Planets and the Universe

Make science fiction settings recognizable worlds with a twist on the characters or the advancements. Often we think of outer space when we think of science fiction. We also think of that futuristic world as having shiny, white, germ-free scientific laboratories. However, George Lucas’ world of the future included garbage and rags in *Star Wars*. He approached his setting from a new direction and made science fiction history.

Advancements in Technology

Medicines of the future hold great promise for those living today. Some common hopes for future medical breakthroughs include increased longevity, instant operations, and super-human abilities. Machines of the future will be able to do unheard of tasks. Some stereotypical mechanical advancements include space travel, powerfully destructive weaponry, and shrink rays.

Senses

When writing science fiction, include sensory details to transport the reader to an alien world. Describe the setting and characters using sounds, smells, and touches of that world.



Science Fiction Could Mean Cowboy Aliens

Activity

Name:

Class:

Directions: Create a character for a new kind of science fiction novel. Use a western setting instead of a planetary, scientific setting for your character. Answer the questions below to develop your character and setting. On a separate piece of paper, write a one-paragraph description of your character and the setting.

Character Questions

What does your character look like?

What does he, she, or it do?

What does he, she or it eat?

What doesn't he, she, or it do?

How does the character fit this genre?

Setting Questions

What is the temperature of your setting?

Where is your western setting?

Are there buildings or open prairies?

Let your imagination stampede across the page as you create this futuristic world!

Attention!

If you were asked to create a creature for a novel, one important question to ask the author is, "What is the genre?" The genre determines the creature. For example, J. K. Rowling is a master at creating fantasy creatures whereas George Lucas excels at creating science fiction creatures.



Science Fiction for the Eyes

Activity

Name:

Class:

Scenario:

You awake one morning and see like a microscope. Your eyes detect germs and small dust particles floating through the air. The number of minute organisms floating in the air blurs your vision. Possessing this super ability makes you a valuable superhero. You rank as the nation's top expert on germ warfare because you see dangerous particles. You also have a weakness because of this skill, a weakness that only you know (even Superman had a weakness for Kryptonite).

Directions: Write a science fiction story where you save the United States from deadly germ warfare. On a separate piece of paper write a one-page story from a first person point of view. Establish a setting from the start. Create as many other characters as necessary (maybe even a sidekick), but remember that you are the hero who leads the others to a happy ending.

Fantasy

Overview

“When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton.”

The Fellowship of the Ring, Book One
J. R. R. Tolkien

In a fantasy genre, the imagination explodes. If you can think, dream, or wish it, that is potential material for a fantasy. In this world you experiment with magical qualities.

Royalty or Animals

The characters in a fantasy are limitless and include knights, wizards, oracles, dragons, witches, and evil characters so wicked that no one dare utter their names. The main character often has a loyal sidekick who saves the day in some sort of bumbling fashion.

Buildings or Empires

Settings in a fantasy are limitless too. The only qualification is that at least one element, either character or setting, needs to be imaginary to make the story a fantasy. Roald Dahl’s factory looks real on the outside for his setting in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, but the world behind the factory walls is a fantasy adventure world. Not all settings are easily contained. Some writers create such vast worlds that they include maps. Characters live in huts or castles, but the evil character often lives in a heavily guarded castle.



Battles

A common plot in a fantasy requires the ultimate good character to battle the ultimate evil character where the existence of mankind balances on the outcome.

Sensory details

Many fantasy settings are created in the mind of the writer who conveys this mystical world to the reader through sensory description. Along with the characters, the reader travels through the wardrobe in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to a wonderful new world because C. S. Lewis paints pictures with his words. Readers cheer Harry Potter to victory during the quidditch match because they too experience the sights, sounds, and smells in this realm.

Fantasy Features



Name: _____

Class: _____

Directions: Label the following book titles with the letter F if they are examples of fantasy literature, NF if they are not. Then explain your answer. Skip the explanation if the book is not fantasy. You may not be familiar with all of these titles, so you may have to do some research

Attention!

One of the best ways to understand fantasy is to find examples of fantasy books in your library or classroom.

1. ____ *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* _____
2. ____ *The Wizard of Oz* _____
3. ____ *Wuthering Heights* _____
4. ____ *The Hobbit* _____
5. ____ *Jacob Have I Loved* _____
6. ____ *The Voice on the Radio* _____
7. ____ *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* _____
8. ____ *The Call of the Wild* _____
9. ____ *The Once and Future King* _____
10. ____ *Rifles for Watie* _____
11. ____ *Kidnapped* _____
12. ____ *The Tale of Despereaux* _____
13. ____ *Olive's Ocean* _____
14. ____ *Everything on a Waffle* _____
15. ____ *Ella Enchanted* _____
16. ____ *The Chronicles of Narnia* _____
17. ____ *Sarah, Plain and Tall* _____
18. ____ *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh* _____
19. ____ *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* _____
20. ____ *The Cay* _____

Places You've Only Dreamed Of



Name:

Class:

Directions: Take 60 minutes outside of class to create a travel brochure advertising a vacation spot depicting a fantasy setting. Entice your readers to visit this fantastical setting. Bring your brochure back to class tomorrow.

Factors to include in your writing:

1. Name of the location
2. Positive features of this location—summer year-round, gumball trees, ice cream capped mountains, etc.
3. Ways to spend time while visiting this land
4. What to bring or not bring
5. Creatures one may encounter
6. Typical travel poster information—cost, departure/arrival times, hotels, etc.

Attention!

C. S. Lewis had Narnia,
J. K. Rowling had Hogwarts.
What is your fantasy
destination?

Biography

Overview

A biography is an account of someone's life written by or described by another. Don't confuse this term with autobiography, a genre where a writer tells or writes his own life story.

Choose a Subject

Biographers write about someone who interests them. Pick a person who captures your interest.

Research

Research this person by gathering as much information about him/her as possible. If your individual is famous, use the Internet as well as encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, and videos to discover information about him/her. Grandparents, parents, and others are good resources too.

Question

Think like a journalist writing questions for an interview. List questions that you would like answered about a particular person. Maybe you are doing a biography of Adolf Hitler and want to know his motives. You might find his family heritage useful. Start with questions and search for answers.

Be Objective

Be honest in your writing. A journalist must eliminate his/her bias from news writing — likewise with a biographer. Your opinion of a person doesn't necessarily belong in their biography.

Add Human Qualities

A biography is not just a chronological list of facts about a person's life. Make the person come alive just like a character in a story. Capture the soul of the person. Use sensory details, similes, and metaphors to allow the reader to connect to that person. Add dialogue or quotes from your subject. Comment on the conflicts in that person's life. These techniques will bring your character to life.

Biographies Start With Great Questions



Name:

Class:

Directions: As an investigative reporter, your job is to research an infamous person in history. (Infamous means famous for doing something undesirable.) As a class, brainstorm a list of people who are known for their illegal activities. The list may include bank robbers, gangsters, presidents, world leaders, or terrorists. Choose one whom you would like to know more about. Write ten great questions that you would like answered about this individual.

Attention!

Writers are part-time detectives, part-time scientists. They sift through the facts to deduce hypotheses and document them on paper.

Example: *Why did he or she commit that crime?*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.





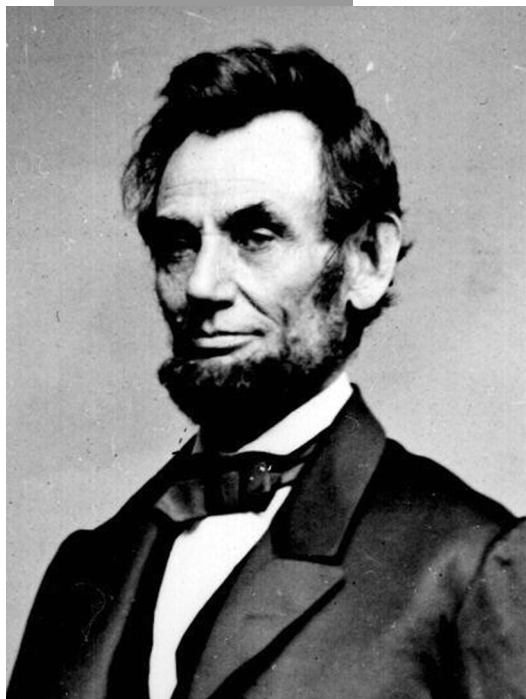
Activity

Name:

Class:

Biographies About Great People

Directions: Choose a famous (not infamous) person. In the space below list ten questions you want answered about your subject. In 60 minutes outside of class, do the research to answer those questions. On a separate piece of paper, write a one-page biography. You may arrange your information in chronological order and include some basic facts, but also share the thoughts and feelings of your subject. Make the individual come alive for your reader. Bring this paper and your biography back to class tomorrow.



1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Answer Key

Character Types, page 5

Round or Flat

1. flat
2. flat
3. round
4. round
5. flat

Static or Dynamic (key words)

1. dynamic (comprehend)
2. static (always)
3. static (never)
4. dynamic (eventually)
5. static (loves)

Fantasy Features, page 60

Reasons may vary. Here are some possible answers:

1. NF
2. F—lion talks, scarecrow talks, witches, magical situation
3. NF
4. F—wizards, knights, dragons, odd creatures, magical situation
5. NF
6. NF
7. NF
8. NF
9. F—wizards, knights, magical situation
10. NF
11. NF
12. F—talking animals
13. NF
14. NF
15. F—princess, prince, magical situation
16. F—talking animals, knights, royalty, magical situation
17. NF
18. F—talking animals
19. F—talking animal creatures, wizards, witches, magical situation
20. NF